House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Farr: Build Mag Lev Rail Line to Spur Economic Growth In Hartford, Waterbury, Danbury

Saying construction of a state of the art high-speed rail line along the I-84 corridor between Boston and New York City would encourage economic growth in Hartford, Waterbury and Danbury, state Representative Bob Farr, R-19th District, today called on the General Assembly's Transportation Committee to support a measure to require the state to study the feasibility of such a project.

Testifying in support of the measure (House Bill 5471), which he introduced, Representative Farr told committee members that if enacted, the bill would help promote economic development in Hartford, Waterbury and Danbury.

The legislation would require the Department of Transportation to study the feasibility of developing a high-speed 'Mag Lev' rail line along the I-84 corridor between Boston and New York, with stops in Hartford, Waterbury and Danbury.

Known as magnetically levitated trains, or Mag Levs, the trains 'float' on magnetic fields and are propelled by linear induction motors. The propulsion system for the trains is part of the track. Mag Levs 'float' about 10 millimeters above the track, which propels the train.

The system would move people at speeds of more than 300 miles per hour and cut the commuting time from New York to Boston to approximately 55 minutes. It also would reduce the time to get from Hartford to either Boston or New York to about 30 minutes.

"The Mag Lev system is the most environmentally friendly transportation mode currently available. Mag Levs use less energy than any other form of transportation, including conventional trains. It is the safest and quietest form of transportation. The only noise Mag Levs make is a soft swishing sound as they speed by," Representative Farr said. "A Mag Lev system could carry 13,000 passengers an hour, the equivalent of six to eight lanes of highway, or 50 Boeing 747 aircraft. Mag Lev freight lines also would mean significantly less truck traffic in Connecticut. "

One of their most significant features is that they operate on monorail-type structures, which can be erected relatively quickly and run over the median dividers in highways such as I-84, Representative Farr stated in his testimony.

“Mag Levs are significantly less expensive to maintain because they float along guide ways without making contact with the ground – which means there are fewer moving parts to wear out. Mag Levs accelerate quickly. They can leave a station and be traveling at more than 250 miles per hour in less than three minutes. They can climb much steeper grades than trains and take sharper curves more comfortably and safely,” Representative Farr said.

“Mag Levs are not futuristic vehicles. One has been undergoing testing in Germany for several years. The first successful Mag Lev passenger train currently is operating in Shanghai. China has just announced an extension of its Mag Lev system to a nearby city, a distance of 103 miles at a cost of $3.7 billion. Other trains are planned for Japan and Germany,” Representative Farr said.

“Constructing a Mag Lev train track from Manhattan to Boston along the I-84 corridor would probably cost $12 billion, but preliminary studies indicate that the demand for both passengers and freight would be sufficient to enable it to pay for itself in a few years. Construction costs probably would be less than the ‘Big Dig’ in Boston and the ‘Chunnel’ between England and France - but would have far more economic impact,” Representative Farr said.

If a Mag Lev system is built in Connecticut along the routes of existing highways, it could be in place within six to eight years, Representative Farr said.

“With a Mag Lev in operation, the commute between Hartford and Manhattan would be quicker than the current commute to Manhattan from Stamford. Property values in Hartford and Waterbury would increase by billions if the project is completed. The project would result in significant economic growth elsewhere in the state as well,” Representative Farr said.

“Connecticut should do everything it can to improve its existing highways as well as its rail and bus lines,” Representative Farr said. “However, we also should attempt to move toward new forms of transportation, which will be faster, safer and more convenient. Connecticut built the world’s first limited access highway system and pioneered other new transportation modes. We could regain that leadership position once again.”